Housing and poverty alleviation

1910. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether with the increase of population in every city, housing and poverty alleviation is becoming a major problem;

(b) whether there is any alternative strategy to make life in the villages better so that people are not forced to leave their homes; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION (KUMARI SELJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In the rural areas, Government has launched the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in February, 2006. A large number of Districts have been covered under the Scheme. The objective of the Scheme is to enhance the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by generating wage employment through works that develop the infrastructure base of the area.

Indian work force in Middle East

1911. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have signed an Agreement with the Middle-East countries to protect the interest of our work force there;

(b) if so, the countries with which such agreements have been entered into;

(c) whether the terms of agreement are implemented in letter and spirit; and

(d) the reason for this kind of agreement not being resorted to in Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka where there are huge number of workers of Indian origin?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, the Government has signed MoU with United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The Ministry has finalized an Additional Protocol with Qatar to update the 1985 Agreement.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) MoU with Malaysia has been finalized. MoUs are also being pursued with countries which have large population of Indian emigrant workers. There is no proposal to sign MoU with Singapore and Sri Lanka due to small size of emigrant flows to these countries.

Cases under Emigration ACT/IPC

1912. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the cases registered under the Emigration Act/IPC for illegal trafficking during the last five years and their disposal;

(b) the outcome of cases registered against Rakesh Kumar and Daler Mehandi:

(c) the role and performance of the Protector of Emigrants to check illegal export of manpower from India; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take to check racket of Kabootarbaji?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the house.

Registration of NRI marriages

1913. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Standing Committee on External Affairs has recommended that registration of NRI marriages be made compulsory and stringent action be taken against corrupt Protectorate of Emigrants offices (PoE) and fraudulent recruiting agents;

(b) if so, the follow up action thereon;

(c) the statistics pertaining to incidents of failed and fraudulent marriages of Indian women with NRIs; and

(d) the number of Indian workers in Middle-East and South-East countries and scenario of their exploitation and harassment?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On the issue of compulsory registration of marriages the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) has drawn the attention of all the States/UTs to a recent judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter and requested them to make relevant laws for the same.

MOIA has taken various steps to improve the emigration process and make it more transparent which include upgradation of 3 posts of Protector of Emigrants (PoE) to Deputy Secretary level, conducting periodic vigilance audit of POE offices, computerization of offices of the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) and PoEs, initiation of disciplinary proceedings against PoE officials found involved in corrupt practices and rationalization of procedure for processing of fresh applications and renewal of licenses of recruiting agents.

(c) The Ministry has received about 168 cases relating to failed and fraudulent marriages with overseas Indian spouses.

(d) The number of Indian Workers in the Middle-East and South-East countries is estimated at about five million.

The main problems faced by Indian emigrant workers in foreign countries relate to:

(i) non-payment/reduced/delayed payment of salaries,

(ii) non deployment on promised jobs,